

Liberty, not Servitude, Natural.
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and rouses the revolutionary spirit without providing a remedy for abuses.

How a million of men can submit to the absolute *regime* of a king, especially a bad king, is what La Boetie, like most reasonable beings, cannot understand. That men out of gratitude for some benefit should place one of themselves in a position in which he might do them untold harm, shows a lamentable want of foresight. To remain in subjection and suffer every species of wrong is worse than cowardice. If a man were to announce this voluntary servitude as hearsay, and not as a fact patent to all, nobody would believe him. The people is the author of its own slavery, for to recover its liberty it has merely to will its freedom. Liberty, it would seem, is not a blessing desired by man, for, though he has but to desire in order to attain it, he prefers to remain in an effeminate slavery. Be resolute to serve no longer, and you will be free. If this seems paradoxical, it is because, cries La Boetie, the love of liberty, the most natural of sentiments, has been so long stifled by bondage that it has ceased to seem natural. Nevertheless, man is born in subjection only to his parents and to reason. Nature has given the same form to all, in order that all may realise their brotherhood. If there is any advantage in individual ability, it ought only the more to foster fraternal affection between man and man by enabling the strong to minister to the necessities of the weak. Nature has ordained society, companionship, for man, not the oppression of the weak by the strong. Liberty is therefore natural. Long live liberty! The kingship in any form—whether obtained by election, succession, or conquest—appears to La Boetie, who has in his view the absolute sway of a Henry II., equally hostile to liberty. The king who has been elected strives to affirm his power at the expense of liberty ; the king by succession regards the people as his natural slaves ; the conqueror as his prey. A man born unaccustomed to modern subjection would certainly instinctively prefer to obey his reason rather than any other man. Men become slaves only "by constraint and deception, never by natural impulse. At first they usually deceive themselves in this matter, to discover speedily that they have been and are being duped. So apt are they to mistake for nature what they owe only to their